

Beal Street development will feature two affordable units

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Eight cottages, including two affordable, are planned for the three-acre 80 Beal Street site. The Zoning Board of Appeals recently granted a Chapter 40 Comprehensive Permit for the project, which was proposed by the Hingham Affordable Housing Trust, with some conditions. Comprehensive Permits allow less local oversight than is required through the normal review process in exchange for a 25 percent minimum affordable housing component.

In this case, however, the Trust worked cooperatively with neighbors to ensure the development fits in with the surrounding neighborhood.

“This is the first time the Trust has received a 40B permit, and the neighborhood likes it!” Selectman Laura Burns told fellow Selectmen recently. “This is the way of the future.” Burns represents the board on the Trust.

The next step is for the town to issue a Request for Proposals for a developer, “written to ensure our vision gets fulfilled,” Burns said.

The goal is to have the units on the market in the spring, “and hopefully they will be sold instantly,” she said. “Our costs will be recouped and put back into the Trust’s coffers.” In its “findings and decision,” the ZBA determined that “there is a local need for affordable housing units and that the Applicant’s proposal is consistent with those local needs.” The three-bedroom, two-bathroom cottages will have 1,200-square-feet of living space, 800 square feet of useable basement space, a farmer’s porch, and a one-car garage.

The conversion of living space to additional bedrooms is prohibited. No further subdivision of the site or additional housing units would be allowed without further approval of the Board. The affordable units must remain so in perpetuity.

The market-rate units would sell for about \$500,000. The affordable ones would be in the \$171,600 to \$220,000 range, according to HAHT member Tim White.

The plans were prepared by a team consisting of Strekalovsky Architecture, Coyle & Caron, LLC, and Merrill Associates. The access will be to and from Beal Street. The site contains mature trees, and the rear of the site is woodlands. The property was formerly occupied by the Amego group home for individuals with autism and related disorders.

A Trust contribution of \$122,000 and Town Meeting-approved Community Preservation Act funds (up to \$150,000) will be used to subsidize the cost of building the affordable units, for which there will be a lottery process. Certain income qualifications apply.

State approval for this “friendly 40B” (one which is generally in keeping with the needs, goals, and objectives of the town) Local Initiative Project was also required.

Trust created by Town Meeting

The HAHT was created through a 2007 Town Meeting warrant article. Among other things, the Trust took over the functions of the former Housing Partnership Committee.

The Trust is one of several state-authorized affordable housing trusts that work with state and town agencies to preserve existing housing opportunities and increase housing for those of low and moderate income.

The Trust’s responsibilities include evaluating Hingham’s housing needs, formulating appropriate housing goals, reviewing Local Initiative Projects, identifying opportunities to expand the town’s affordable housing inventory, and implementing and overseeing affordable housing programs.

The Trust has the ability to receive money and property and to undertake projects to improve affordable housing opportunities in Hingham, with certain town oversight.

The Trust worked with the Selectmen to exercise the town’s right of first refusal to acquire the affordable Lincoln School Apartments for the elderly and disabled and to preserve their affordability. The complex has become self-supporting.